4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

enter, redden their lips and cheeks with iris powder or carmine, and stain their nails and the palms of their hands with henna. 302

The social status of the Albanian women varies according to district and creed. The Liaps and the Christians of Southern Albania and Epirus generally occupy the least enviable position, all the hard out-of-door work devolving upon them. The Northern Albanians and also the Tosks, on the other hand, treat their wives with much greater consideration, consult them willingly in their affairs, both public and private, and accord them a position in the family almost equal to their own. And well do they merit the respect of their husbands and brothers. For often have they proved themselves to be fit companions for men, unmindful of fatigue, danger, and even death in the cause of liberty. When the armies of the Sultan menaced the privileges of which the people of Scutari had always been proud, it was the women who were the first to give the alarm and to excite the men to resist to the death, themselves following to aid in the combat. Restraining the tears natural to their sex, they would carry the mutilated bodies of their loved ones among the combatants in order to excite them to avenge their deaths. And the same women are said to have refused to receive back into their homes the husbands and sons who had for a moment turned their backs upon the enemy. 562 [462] [703]

Albanian women, too, are often entrusted with negotiations for truce or peace. Such is the respect with which Albanians regard their women that they 562 628 728

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CHAPTER XI

BAJRAKTARS

It is an Albanian tradition that when the Turks began to raise Albanian levies for their army they chose specially brave tribesmen to lead the levies and called them by the Turkish name of *deli*, meaning 'madman' or 'desperado'. At a later date they called them *spahis* (cavalrymen), and at a still later date *bajraktars* (standard-bearers), from the Turk *bajrak*, standard. So the word bajraktar conveys the business of the man so-called, and the origin of his title. He was the military leader of his tribe and owed his appointment to the Turks, not to his fellow-Albanians.

Neither delis nor spahis seem to have been blood ancestors of the bajraktars. Each tribe knows how its first bajraktar won his flag but never says that he was either a deli or a spahi. In the folk-tales which purport to recount their deeds, the spahis figure not as heroes but as ordinary cavalrymen of the type we still find in Algeria. Certain families, notably in Lumë and Yugoslav Losovë, are surnamed Spahi. These claim descent not from medieval bravos but from relatively modern cavalrymen, and they are not bajraktars. The memory of the delis and their deeds survives only in folk-tales and an occasional personal name. The bajraktar of Hot at the beginning of the century was Deli Metë Çuni. In the folk-tales the delis, more fortunate than the spahis, preserve their reputation as doughty fighters.

Tribal traditions agree that most *bajraks* were bestowed on the original holder like a Victoria Cross, for valour in battle. The combats were generally against the Serbs and Montenegrins, natural enemies of the Albanians as they were their nearest neighbours, and had not ceased ever since they appeared in the Balkans to steal ancient Albanian territory. Some bajraks are said to have been gained hundreds of years ago, and others only a few generations since. The historical details in the traditions are generally meagre and the chronology vague, but these defects make on the whole for greater credibility, assuring us that no lively imagination has been at work. To minds running as Albanian

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703 minds do on courage as the highest of virtues, the traditions are a great inspiration.[1]

721 703 The following traditions are samples. The bajrak of Hot was won four hundred years ago by an ancestor of Deli Metë Çuni who distinguished himself by cutting off Montenegrin heads, a pastime in which the family has ever since indulged with gusto. Sul Alija, the great-grandfather of Adem Bajrami, who lived four generations ago, was made bajraktar of Krasniqe in reward for the bravery he displayed during a war between Turkey and Montenegro. Sefer Ahmeti was given his bajrak at Moraç near Belgrade after a battle against the Serbs. The first bajraktar of Nikaj also won his standard at Moraç, possibly in the same battle. Kolë Voci, who lived six generations ago, became the first bajraktar of Shalë-Gimaj in consequence of killing a Serbian bajraktar and carrying his head and standard to the officer commanding the Turkish forces. In the same battle the bajraktar of Plan was killed, but Voci caught up and saved his bajrak from capture by the enemy. Avdi Kola, a later bajraktar of Gimaj, was proud to boast that since Voci won the flag no male of his house had died in his bed.

701 Certain tribes had more than one bajraktar, some as many as five. Where there were two or more bajraktars the senior took precedence over the junior. If a senior bajraktar was killed in battle it was the junior's duty to take his flag.

The office of the tribal bajraktar was hereditary, going from father to son. If a bajraktar died without leaving a son he was succeeded by his brother, his brother's son, or in default of these, a cousin in the male line. If he was too old or too ill before his death to act, these relatives deputised for him. If the natural heir was a minor at his father's death, his father's brother or nephew took office until he came of full age and powers when twenty, twenty-five, or even thirty years of age, the date varying according to his capabilities. In 1933 Kolë Ndue was senior bajraktar of [the standard, the holder of which was the military leader of his tribe -- Analyst]

[1] The bajrak was not, however, always granted for military valour but was sometimes conferred for less martial reasons. For instance, Pec Peci of Pecnikaj, Shalë, was summoned to the presence of the head of the Begolli family to explain why he, a peasant, had seven wives, while the great Begolli contented himself with only three. Pec's explanation, that only one of the women was really his wife and the others servants who looked after his land and flocks as menservants might have done, though known to be untrue, so fascinated Begolli by its astuteness that he forthwith made Pec bajraktar not only of Shalë, but also of all Dukagjin.

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bajraktars to the south of it in non-tribal Martanesh; but there was none within its own boundaries. There factions, not tribes, were the social units, and all power, military and otherwise, was concentrated in the hands of four powerful bey families.

From first to last the primary function of a bajraktar was military. When one learned that war was imminent and troops were required, he had immediately to inform the tribe in the first instance by firing eight shots in quick succession into the air, and in the second by sending out the official runner called *kasnec* with news and a statement of how many men were wanted. One from each house was the usual number. The muster was soon complete, for it was thought shameful to hang back or to hide at home and no time was wasted hunting for deserters. When all had gathered, the march began. Two tribesmen in some cases, and in others four, led off singing. Next came a man closely connected with the bajraktar, preferably his eldest son, carrying the flag. The rank and file followed, firing constantly into the air to show their joy at the call to arms. Any sign of depression at leaving their homes would have been thought disgraceful and unmanly. The best warriors among them had the bajraktar in their midst and would guard him and the flag with their lives till they all came marching home again. No equipment was issued to bajraktars or 'soldiers'; each brought his own rifle and pistols and came in his ordinary clothes. Nor was any military training given them. Their value as soldiers depended upon the rifle practice which they had had at home. It was usually sufficient to make them all good shots. After a few months the war ended and they came home again, still in their peasant clothes and again firing into the air for joy.

In time of peace the bajraktar performed civilian duties. One of the chief was caring for the poor. If they got into trouble or needed work he intervened with the authorities. If they were benighted he gave them free board and lodging. On high occasions he sent them a ram on which to feast. So that they could buy on credit what they needed for their weddings and funerals he went guarantee for them at the village shops; perhaps he even paid for the goods when the following harvest failed and left them unable themselves to clear the debt. At times he lent them money without interest. In return he asked only that if required they would put their rifles at his disposal, joining him in attacking an enemy, spending some weeks annually in his house as unpaid or poorly paid guards,